

October 3, 1998

## **Bill Clinton: On the Road and Off the Job**

### **AWOL President is America's Foremost Frequent Flyer**

For a man bent on remaining in the White House, President Clinton sure likes to spend a lot of time away from it. Last year President Clinton broke the presidential record for foreign travel with his 27<sup>th</sup> trip abroad. And like the Energizer Bunny, he has continued to keep going and going and going. . . . This year, he's so far logged another 41 days overseas in 11 foreign countries.

However, just because Clinton isn't on foreign soil doesn't mean he is necessarily in the White House. Bill Clinton also likes to travel around this country as well. He is particularly fond of combining his domestic travel with campaign fundraisers — at least 37 trips have included fundraisers just through September 1998. And there are at least 14 more fund-raising events scheduled for October alone, according to press reports.

All told, Clinton spent almost half of 1997 (149 days) and well over half of 1998 so far (155 days) outside of Washington, D.C. As already noted, Clinton's travel — at taxpayer expense — long ago broke the White House record. To put this in perspective, Clinton, with his 304 days out of town in the last two years, has already spent more time out of Washington than four of the last five Congresses have spent *in session* (See Graph 1).

If the implications weren't so serious, Clinton's wanderlust would be merely amusing. This is, after all, a president who has claimed an initiative for every problem and credit for every solution. Yet, the President hasn't been around for much of the work. If America is to believe he is serious about Social Security reform, Medicare reform, health care reform, tax reform and a host of other problems, it would help if they could first believe he was going to be here.

### **Foreign Travel: Not Since Hope and Crosby**

In 1992, then-candidate Clinton excoriated President Bush for taking 25 trips to 60 countries from 1989 to 1993, sanctimoniously stating, "It is time for us to have a president who cares more about Littleton, New Hampshire than about Liechtenstein: more about Manchester than Micronesia." Once in office, however, Clinton seemed intent on breaking the Bush record, and did so with his 27<sup>th</sup> trip abroad (according to the 11/21/97 *Christian Science Monitor*) to Canada on November 22, 1997.

- In less than two years (1997 and through September 1998), Clinton has spent almost as many days overseas as President Bush did during his entire term: 79 versus 86 days.
- Clinton has taken 32 foreign trips during his presidency — six more than Bush took — to 78 countries — including 51 different ones. Trips to South Korea, Japan, and Malaysia are already planned for later this year.

### **Domestic Travel: Fundraiser-in-Chief**

As America has discovered, just because Clinton is in the country doesn't mean he's in the White House. The "D.C." in Washington, D.C. is coming to stand for "devoid of Clinton." While Clinton was able to leave his passport in the White House, he has made sure he has taken donor cards — as the press has noted fundraising is prominent on his travel agenda.

- In 1997, Clinton spent 111 days on the road on domestic travel. He has already surpassed that in 1998 with travel 114 days, just through the month of September.
- In 1997, Clinton used at least 28 of those travel days for fundraising. Through September of this year, Clinton has already used at least 37 travel days for fundraising.

Clinton may well figure out that he can raise a lot more campaign cash: instead of just overnights in the Lincoln Bedroom, he can sublet the whole place, since he's so rarely there!

### **Clinton Travel: The Unending Road Trip**

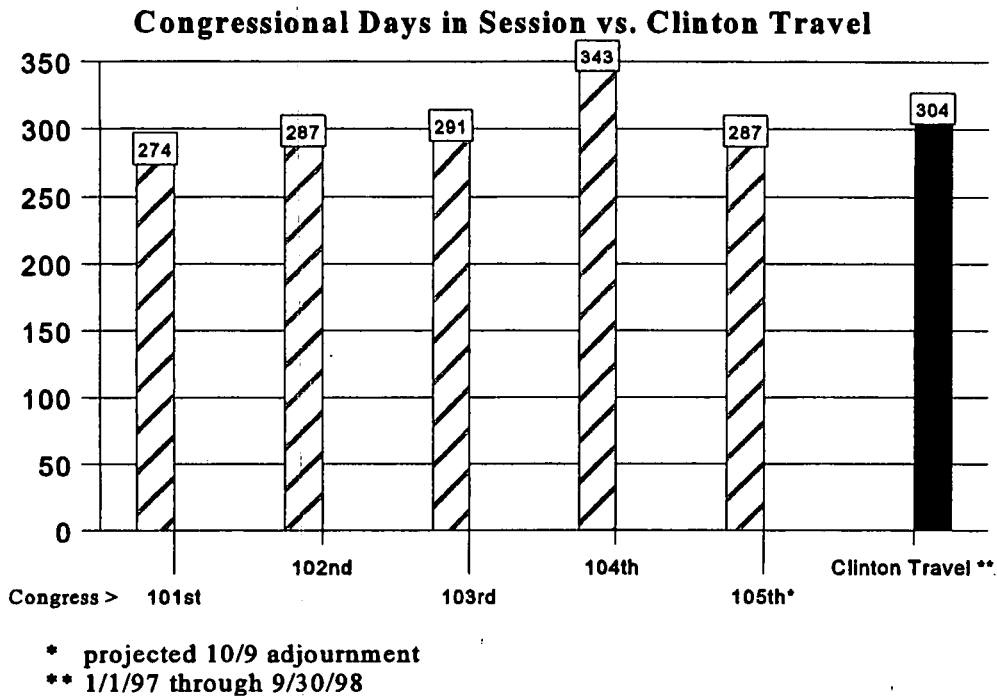
Even considering necessary travel, it's not easy to put our present peripatetic president into perspective. While Clinton has been quick to blame Congress for what has been going on in Washington, he himself has been absent from it. Nor has this absence been cheap. Not only has it cost America his leadership on issues such as Social Security, Medicare, health care, and tax reform — it has also cost America in real dollars: as long ago as 1992, DOD reported it cost taxpayers \$42,000 per flying-hour on Air Force One — it could well be higher today.

- Clinton was out of town for 149 days in 1997 and 155 days through September, 1998.
- Clinton has spent a total of 304 days outside of Washington in just the 21 months — that's almost every other day away from the White House (See Graph 2).
- Clinton has spent more time away from Washington than four of the last five Congresses spent in session (the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress was in session 343 days).

It is not as though the country does not have problems that call for a president's attention. Perhaps it's time President Clinton stayed in town to do the job he campaigned to do and continues (and continues, and continues...) to campaign so hard to keep. Mr. President, Spring break's over.

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**Graph 1:**



**Graph 2:**

